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ABSTRACT

Requirements for student entrance into teacher education programs in 11 southern states were surveyed on two levels: state requirements and teacher education institution requirements. The states studied were Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. It was found that all the states except Arkansas had passed legislation on admission requirements for teacher education programs. The admission requirements for teacher candidates into 84 college and university teacher education programs in the eleven states were also examined. Among the criteria used most freqently by the institutions were grade point averages, successful completion of a course in education with laboratory experiences, recommendations by faculty members, and written language proficiency. A comparison between the state requirements and the institutional requirements revealed that the statewide requirements were more specific. It is suggested that prospective teachers should have basic communication skills before they graduate. (FG)

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SURVEY OF TEACHER EDUCATION ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS IN ELEVEN SOUTHERN STATES, 1982

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SURVEY OF TEACHER EDUCATION ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS IN ELEVEN SOUTHERN STATES, 1982

Introduction

The general public, the profession, and colleges and universities have the responsibility for preparing teachers. However, departments, schools and colleges of education must take the leading role in developing and applying standards that assure that teachers can and will be able to teach our children and youth. The public, through legislation, is demanding "better prepared, competent teachers." Leaders from departments, schools and colleges of education in each state need to get together and make a united effort to develop some standards to apply state-wide to improve the quality of teachers in each state. Each state group should consider as a base some standards that have been recognized nationally. AACTE resolutions agreed upon in 1980 may be a good base.

1. In recognition of the need for quality teacher education, AACTE supports a test of basic skills as a criterion for entry or continuance in teacher education programs.
2. In recognition of the need for quality teacher education, AACTE supports a program of assessment of professional skills as an exit requirement for teacher preparation programs. This assessment should include:

(a) communication skills

(b) human relations skills

(c) generic teaching skills

(d) subject matter proficiency.

This is not the time to debate issues and use stalling tactics, but a time to get on with action that will restore public onfidence in our teachers and the process of preparing teachers. This is also the time to continue research into the best ways to prepare teachers and make use of that research.

Purpose and Method of Procedure

The purpose of this study was to gather data on two levels to determine the requirements for admission to teacher education in eleven southern states. Level One data consider requirements at the state level in each of the states and Level Two data consider requirements of institutions within the eleven states.

Level One

Since the laws of each state relating to education are so different, each state will be considered separately.

ALABAMA

According to Sandefur[1] the Alabama State Board of Education has employed the National Evaluation System to develop tests in the basic

skills to be administered in 1981. The state presently requires a score of 16 on the ACT for entry into professional programs.

ARKANSAS

The State of Arkansas has no regulations at the state level for admission to teacher education programs.[2] Each college or university has freedom to establish its own requirements.

FLORIDA

The State Board of Education has a state-wide program for admitting students to teacher education programs. "As a prerequisite for admission, a student shall receive a Composite score of 17 on the American College Test or a Composite score of 835 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test or an equivalent score on any other nationally normed standardized college entrance examination approved by the Commissioner. This requirement is waived for up to 10 percent of those admitted to the teacher education program of an institution . . . . In addition, the policy shall include a variety of factors, including demonstration of the Communication and Computation Competencies, . . . , minimum grade point averages for all college level preparation completed, and other standards prescribed by the institution as predictors of success in the program and in the profession."[3]

GEORGIA

"The State Board of Education of Georgia does not set specific requirements for entrance into teacher education. These prerogatives are left to the individual colleges and universities and are based on their individual philosophies. The State Board of Education does, however, have general criteria for approving teacher education programs in the state."[4]

The State Board of Education, on February 14, 1980, approved a document entitled "Administrative Procedures for Teacher Education Programs."[5] One section of that document has some general statements on admission to teacher education programs. "For purposes of admission and continuation in the program, there shall be evidence of the application of standards of scholarship, personality, health, and behavior. Those students not meeting the standards prescribed shall, . . . , be eliminated from the teacher education program."

KENTUCKY

In response to a written request for information about admission requirements for teacher education, the Kentucky State Department of Education sent a copy of a document being considered.[6] This draft document outlines a general plan which includes statements about the role of the advisor, and Admissions Committee and some general admission criteria. "Upon expression of an intent to enter a teacher education program, the teacher candidate shall be administered tests to measure skills

in basic literacy--oral and written communication, reading, writing and computational skills."

Another interesting aspect of the proposed plan was the provision for an admission committee composed of ". . . a classroom teacher, a school administrator, a teacher educator, and a representative from the relevant academic area." This committee would be required to render a professional judgment as to whether the teacher candidate may be admitted or denied. In addition to an interview with the candidate, the committee's decision would be based on data, such as, academic record, test scores or basic skills and the candidate's record of pre-professional curricula experience.

LOUISIANA

The Board of Regents of Louisiana adopted standards of admission for entrance into teacher education programs, June, 1981.[7]

1. Effective for all entering freshmen in the fall of 1981 students shall be admitted to professional programs in education at public universities after achieving a score of at least 16 on the ACT and a GPA of at least 2.2
2. Students who achieve scores of 14 on the ACT may be admitted if their GPA is 3.2 or above; ACT score of 15, GPA of 2.3

Since Louisiana requires fairly high NTE scores for certification, a study had been made which indicated that students with an ACT score

less than 16 are unlikely to achieve a score on the NTE sufficiently high to merit certification. In adopting these standards, the Board of Regents went on to state that these "standards of admission are considered minimal criteria for entry . . . and management boards and institutions are urged to elevate these standards . . . ."

MISSISSIPPI

Acting on Senate Resolution No. 7 of the 1981 Session of the Legislature, the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, at its meeting November 1981, passed the following policy.

> Students desiring to enter professional teacher education programs beginning in the spring term 1983, must have obtained minimum composite and sub-scores on the American College Testing Program ACT Assessment.
>
> If the above requirement is not satisfied, a student will be required to take the American College Testing Program's Comprehensive Outcome Measures Project (COMP) composite examination and make minimum scores to be determined . . . later . . . .
>
> All students will be required to make a minimum score on the speaking and writing portions of the COMP examination.

This policy also set up a research design for the purpose of establishing the validity of minimum scores and evaluating the entire testing procedure.[8]

NORTH CAROLINA

The State Board of Education and the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina System adopted a resolution that will require the development and implementation of pre-teacher education screening in the basic skills including English, fine arts, social studies, math and science, and criterion-referenced tests covering various disciplines as prerequisites for certification. This program is to be implemented in stages with the total program in place by July 1, 1985.[9]

SOUTH CAROLINA

Act No. 187 of the 1979 South Carolina General Assembly provided for a broad program to "provide for the training, employment and evaluation of public education." The specific part of the Act relating to admission to teacher education programs is stated in Section 2.[10]

> Adopt program approved standards so that beginning with the 1981-82 school year all colleges and universities in this State that offer undergraduate degrees in education shall require that students successfully complete the basic skills examination that is developed in compliance with this act before final admittance into the undergraduate teacher education programs.

A "Special Project" was established to implement the provisions of this act and it is the writer's understanding that the Project has developed an admissions test that covers math, reading and English. Information available to the writer also indicates that the 1981-82 data were changed

to Fall 1982.

TENNESSEE

The Tennessee State Board of Education on November 9, 1979, approved admission requirements for teacher education candidates. The requirements state that "candidates seeking admission to approved teacher education programs . . . shall meet one or more of the following requirements before being admitted to candidacy." The requirements spell out a certain score on the California Achievement Test, Level 19, or scores of 17 on the ACT, or 765 on the SAT.[11]

TEXAS

In a letter from the Texas Education Agency, December 10, 1981, the following statements were made:

> The Commission on Standards for the Teaching Profession has established May 1, 1984, as the date when all Texas institutions approved for teacher preparation shall require an examination for admission to teacher education. The details of this examination are yet to be developed by the Commission.[12]

Summary

Ten of the eleven southern states contacted for this study have recently (1979-1982) adopted action on the subject of admission requirements for undergraduate programs of teacher education. Arkansas does

not have any state-wide action. Most of the action for admission requirements comes from State Boards of Education with action from boards of higher education coming second and direct acts of the legislature third. However, the data collected for this study indicate that legislation was behind most of the action of other bodies.

Level Two

Within each state, institutions have criteria other than the ones applied at the state level. Level Two is a consideration of requirements for admission to teacher education at 84 of the institutions in the eleven southern states.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Several studies have reported data on the selection criteria for teacher preparation programs, including the ones by Roweton,[13] Watts,[14] Uno and others.[15] The purpose of this part of the paper is to summarize the admission requirements to teacher education programs of 84 colleges and universities in the eleven southern states and not to compare these requirements with findings of other studies.

According to the 1981-82 NCATE Annual List, 121 colleges and universities in the eleven states had programs accredited by NCATE. All of these institutions were asked to send their present admission requirements, and 84, or 70 percent, responded. The data presented in this part of the paper refer to data from these 84 colleges and universities.

A listing of all the admission to teacher education criteria required by one or more of these institutions number 21. By far the most required criterion was an overall grade point average. Seventy-seven of the 84 institutions, or 92 percent, required grade point averages ranging from 2.0 to 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. A majority of the schools required a GPA of 2.2 or lower. Only four of the 84 institutions required a 2.5.

The second most used criterion applied for admission was a pre-professional course in edcuation with laboratory experiences. Forty-five institutions, or 53 percent, of the group surveyed used this requirement. In some institutions this course is used as a "screening course" in which a student has to meet certain specific competencies. For example, one institution has a faculty committee of three faculty members interview and test each student. Most institutions stated that students must satisfactorily pass the course.

Recommendation by the faculty was the third most used criterion reported by the institution. Forty-five percent, 39 institutions, used this criterion. Some institutions reported this as a "real hard look" at each student and others indicated the "good ole girl (boy)" approach.

Written language proficiency was a requirement of 36 institutions, or 42 percent. Some institutions recommend that students report to the "Writing Lab" and other institutions have specific writing competencies that the student must meet before being admitted.

Closely related to written language proficiency in intent and in a number of institutions using it, was the requirement for completion of

English courses. Again, 34 institutions, or 40 percent, required satisfactory completion of one or more English courses. Some institutions stated that students must pass the required English courses and others specified grades of "C" or better in certain English courses. If the requirements of the written language proficiency and completion of English courses were considered together, seventy institutions, or 83 percent, would have this requirement.

Health standards was a requirement of 34, or 40 percent, of the institutions. This requirement was usually met by a statement from a medical doctor stating that the student was in good health.

Standards for personal qualities was a requirement in 24, or 28 percent, of the institutions. In nearly all cases this standard did not require the use of any kind of instruments but was based on the judgment of faculty members who had taught the student.

Speech and hearing screening was an admission requirement at 23 institutions, or 27 percent, of the total 84. The passing of a public speaking course was the basic check used by most institutions for the speaking part of this requirement. Hearing screening was usually an audio-metric screening.

Math proficiency, ACT scores of 16 or 17 and reading proficiency were the next three criteria most used by the institutions. Each of these criteria was used by less than 20 percent of the institutions. The following criteria were used by less than 10 percent of the institutions: faculty

interviews, written autobiography, personality tests, speech course, specified math course, Minnesota Teacher Aptitude Inventory, selective admission to university, state board or regents examination.

Summary

A comparison of the state-wide requirements and the individual institution requirements for admission to teacher education programs reveals that the state requirements have more specificity in them. Anyone who has worked in a college or university in the teacher preparation process is aware of the weaknesses of criteria such as grade point averages, faculty recommendations, taking a pre-professional course, or passing a series of English courses. These criteria can be very useful, but in my opinion, they have not been used to effectively screen out some of the weaker students. The public outcries that I hear are voiced over the spoken and written language of teachers. Maybe college and university education faculty need to work to be sure that when teachers graduate from their programs they have the basic communication skills.

In the writer's opinion, colleges and universities must have good evidence that the teacher candidate has the basic communication skills before he/she graduates.

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